

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Badgers, Antelopes make us all proud

They gathered in the parking lot at Baker High School, the Powder Valley Badgers fans clad in red and blue, the backers of the Adrian Antelopes in green and gold.

They mingled and talked football and enjoyed hamburgers and hot dogs grilled by Badger supporters.

Then they walked over to Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium and cheered for the young men who have made these two small communities swell with pride this fall.

The Antelopes from Adrian, population 157, prevailed 46-38 to complete a perfect 13-0 season with a Class 1A state championship.

The Badgers from North Powder, population 504, led almost the entire game but settled for second place and a record of 11-2, the only two blemishes on the schedule etched by the Antelopes.

The events of Saturday, Nov. 27 epitomize the prominent role that high school sports play in Eastern Oregon.

And the pregame tailgate party put on by Powder Valley boosters was a fine example of how sports can foster camaraderie even between the fans of opposing teams.

Rivalry too often is a word with negative connotations, saddled with adjectives such as bitter and heated.

But the Badgers and the Antelopes have shown that two teams, and their fans, can compete at the highest level while maintaining a mutual respect that persists regardless of the numbers on the scoreboard.

Congratulations to both sides for reminding us of what high school sports can, and should, be about.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Your views

Herald giving too much attention to allegations

I must ask why you're giving attention to the unfounded and frankly, at best disingenuous allegations by Jason and Susan Bland regarding Kerry McQuisten?

A front page article of Jason Bland was run accusing Ms. McQuisten of defamation. When one reads the article, there is one small sentence admitting she never spoke about the man in public, or to anyone outside the City Council. Was the headline just for grabbing reader attention? Is the BCH in the habit of headlining what has, so far, proven to be false information and allegations? What has happened to fact finding and truth in journalism?

I seem to recall you also ran a false accusation article that smacks of a hit piece, written by another gubernatorial campaign that was written directly after Ms. McQuisten announced her bid. Has Ms. McQuisten been given space for a reply?

It appears that Mr. Bland, is, himself, the individual who is running to the media and public meetings repeatedly.

His wife, Susan went to the council on more than one occasion to make unfounded accusations about the mayor's

campaign finances and the BCH printed them without performing its journalistic due diligence to see if they were in fact true. They were not.

This is strongly suggesting that the BCH is very willing to do political hack pieces against conservatives and has drums they are beating that does not remotely support the above mentioned, "truth in journalism," and sadly, even integrity, apparently.

I have been hearing of both, "liberal," and, "conservative," friends canceling their subscriptions to your paper.

If, collectively, the paper is more interested in promoting a political agenda than to the keeping of accurate reporting, as well as being willing to promote yellow journalism type headlines, I can certainly see why.

Kate Grace
Halfway

Finding beauty in faith and the sights, smells of winter

The nice thing about winter is that it's very quiet and peaceful. The rush of summer activities are put to rest. The pleasant prospect of enjoying what we worked for is sometimes carried out by a blazing fire in a fireplace, or pleasant

spot by a window. This solace matches the season of the renewal of life, displayed in nature.

Hot chocolates, teas, roasted meats, and the smell of fresh baked goods fill the home with pleasant times and quiet repose. Soft snowflakes fall lazily to the ground turning the world into a beautiful winter wonderland. Happy sounds of children's laughter and play. It's time for sleds, snowmen, snowballs, skating and of course snow angels; a wonderful time of year.

Sometimes the earth looks dead and barren, cold and foreboding. But the promise of renewed life is in every plant and the animal kingdom as well. When the time is right, life will burst forth in newness and the trials of winter forgotten.

When you enter the "winter of life" you are not alone. God has given us the promise of peace and hope (Matthew 11:28). Though the "howling winds of adversity" may assail you, making all look dead and hopeless, relax and trust in the Lord. He has given us the promise of spring (Gen. 8:22) and new life (John 3:16). In the beauty of faith find solace and peace.

Bertina Eastman
Baker City

Schools regret ending campus police

By NICHOLAS GOLDBERG

The idea of "abolishing" or "defunding" the police has always struck me as risky, to say the least, and not very well thought through. It has the potential to cause at least as many problems as it solves.

So when some school districts actually decided give it a try, I worried they might come to regret it sooner rather than later.

Which is exactly what happened in Pomona, California.

To recap: In July, after a long campaign by community activists, the Pomona Unified School District ended its contract with the Pomona Police Department, saying it would do away with on-campus police patrols and rely instead on "proctors" trained to deescalate tense situations.

Guess what? Four months later, after a shooting near Pomona High School left a 12-year-old injured from glass and debris, the school board reversed course and voted to renew the contract. Last week, the Pomona City Council ratified that decision.

And Pomona is not alone. Fremont, in Northern California, also reversed its decision to defund school police. Several other cities among the dozens that eliminated their school police have also considered reinstating them.

So does this suggest that defunding school police was a crazy idea from the start and we can soon go back to the way things were?

Well, sort of. But sort of not.

On the one hand, of course we need police — in schools as elsewhere.

Eliminating them, especially without significant study and clear alternative plans, is reckless.

There are, after all, millions of incidents of drug use, theft, fights, gang activity, sexual assault and weapons possession each year in public schools around the country. Not to mention the infrequent but horrifying school shootings that plague the country. Police are not the root of the problem, and they need to be part of the solution.

But we shouldn't revert to business as usual.

No reasonable person should want to see one more cop than necessary in a school. Police presence sends a message to students that they are suspected criminals, and need to be surveilled, controlled and disciplined.

Furthermore, by many accounts, school police have a tendency to criminalize nonviolent, run-of-the-mill misbehavior.

"When I taught in Watts, I saw cops who were great when there was a gun threat," said Nick Melvoin, a member of the L.A. Unified school board. "But I also saw cops ticketing kids who were late to class, or responding when they talked back to teachers. These are things that shouldn't be handled by armed police officers."

There have been repeated allegations of excessive force by school police. In August, for instance, a deputy at Lancaster High School was seen on video slamming a student to the ground. In September, a Long Beach school safety officer shot and killed an

18-year-old after a fight near school.

What's more, repeated studies around the country have shown disparate treatment of students of color by school police, including disproportionate arrests for Black and Latino kids.

So reform is in order.

Here in Los Angeles, LAUSD — which serves more than 600,000 students — tried to find the middle ground. The school board didn't eliminate the police, but it did vote in June 2020 to reduce the funding for the Los Angeles School Police Department by one-third, or about \$25 million. That meant cutting about 133 positions, including about 70 sworn officers.

The board said it would divert the money to improving schools with large concentrations of Black students.

That sounds good in theory, but it was worrisome too — because the board acted precipitously under pressure from students and activists in the wake of George Floyd's killing, without waiting for recommendations from a task force on the issue already convened by then-Supt. Austin Beutner.

Why not wait for the experts to report back? Was the problem really the number of cops, or something else? Why cut 70 officers rather than 10 or 200? (After the cuts, the task force took such questions off the table and focused, instead, on how to move forward.)

Now, what's done is done. It's too soon to judge the effect because school has been mostly virtual, but with full in-person school back as of August, some principals are already saying

they want their police restored.

The district, to its credit, is trying to encourage less dependency on police. Alfonso Webb, L.A. Unified's director of operations, told me that the diverted \$25 million (and more) is being used to, among other things, add psychiatric social workers, restorative justice counselors and staff trained in "trauma-informed practices." Police are no longer based routinely in high school buildings and only come in when called.

The district in recent years wisely banned the use of pepper spray and certain chokeholds by school officers. It did away with random searches of students for weapons, and stopped the horrifying practice of accepting surplus military equipment from the Pentagon, including grenade launchers and assault rifles.

Maybe it's now time to take away guns from the school police. (For the record, no L.A. School Police officer has ever fired a gun on campus since the force was created in 1984, Beutner said last year.)

Continued training in conflict deescalation is important. And training on systemic racism and implicit bias.

Serious incidents in schools will continue to require a law enforcement response. But let's hope L.A. Unified closely monitors the cutbacks so it can authorize more police officers where necessary and find other, more appropriate solutions where they are not.

Nicholas Goldberg is an associate editor and Op-Ed columnist for the Los Angeles Times.

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